

Congressman Bright Participates in Video Teleconference with Soldiers in Iraq

WASHINGTON,

DC – Today, Congressman Bobby Bright participated via Skype in a video teleconference with soldiers from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) of the 3rd Infantry Division of the United States Army, which is now deployed in Iraq. The unit is based out of Fort Benning, Georgia and the commanding officer is Colonel Peter L. Jones. Congressman Bright spent an hour on the call with approximately 17 Soldiers originally from Alabama.

LTC

David Priatko, Deputy Commanding Officer for the Brigade and Sergeant Major Richard Hairston, Current Operations Sergeant, led the Skype session by presenting Congressman Bright an overview of the brigade's mission and area of operations in Iraq. Afterwards the unit gave the Congressman a chance to thank the "Sledgehammer Brigade" for their service. Later in the day, Congressman Bright delivered a floor speech highlighting some of the recent successes in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in which he talks specifically about the good work of the 3rd HBCT. You can view the floor video by clicking [here](#), and a copy of the speech, as prepared, is attached.

"It

was a true honor to participate in a conference call with our brave men and women serving overseas," Bright said. "The troops in the Sledgehammer Brigade are doing work that is vital to the future of Iraq and the continued safety and security of our nation. We all owe a debt of gratitude to all of our soldiers based overseas. They are the true American heroes."

Major

Melvin Sanders from Montgomery reached out to Congressman Bright's office to arrange the call between his brigade and Congressman Bright. The 3rd HBCT currently in its 4th deployment to Iraq, but its responsibility has shifted to an Advise and Assist Brigade (AAB). The 3rd Brigade is halfway through a 12-month deployment. The Sledgehammer Brigade is responsible for a five-province region south of Baghdad, an area roughly the size of Kentucky.

"The Soldiers of the Hammer Brigade appreciate the opportunity to tell what a great job they are doing, enabling both the Iraqi Security Forces and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams," said Col. Jones.

In its current mission, the 3rd HBCT works with the 8th Iraqi Army Division to train them in neutralizing extremist threats and to protecting the Iraqi border. Its ultimate goal is to develop a competent, capable, and professional force capable of securing internal threats in Iraq. The Sledgehammer Brigade also works with the State Department Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to establish essential services and enable economic growth in the region. In addition, the 3rd HBCT is responsible for logistics in the continued drawn down of U.S. troops in Iraq. When the U.S. reaches its goal of 50,000 troops in Iraq by August 1, 2010, the 3rd HBCT will be one of only six AABs left in the country.

"I would like to thank Major Sanders, Col. Jones, and the rest of the 3rd Brigade for allowing me to speak with them today," Bright said. "It is good to know that soldiers deployed thousands of miles from their homes can still have a direct line back to their representatives in Washington. I look forward to hearing from the 3rd and others in the months ahead as Congress continues to look for ways to support the troops."

"Time and again, our soldiers have excelled at every mission they have been given. It will always be my highest priority to make sure they are given the best possible resources, both while deployed and when they come home."

Soldiers from 3rd HBCT from Alabama who participated in the call include:

SFC
Bobbie J. Bates, Montgomery

1LT
James Delong Champ, Montgomery

SSG
Franco German, Montgomery

SPC
Kelton Jackson, Montgomery

SGT
David Johnsey, Jasper

SSG
Jerry Jones, Montgomery

SPC
Timothy Knightly, Anniston

1SG
Marando Lambert, Frisco City

SGT
Tammy Mathews, Prattville

SPC
Andre Maxwell, Montgomery

SSP
Peters, Opelika

SGT
Jamaal Roberts, Tuscaloosa

SGT
Jody Veal, Attalla

SGT
John Walker, Prattville

SGT
Mindy Walker, Huntsville

SSG
Ralph Woods Jr., Troy

1LT

Willie L. Wright, III, Montgomery